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A Fiscally Sponsored Project of Heluna Health dba PHFE, Inc.

Public Health Foundation Enterprises Inc. dba Heluna Health

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Name of Project: SisterWeb Healing Centered Response to Ongoing Community Crisis

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Benefit to the Community

SisterWeb is Black-led, woman-led, and community-based providing culturally-congruent doula care to African American (AA), Latinx (Lx), and Pacific Islander (PI) mothers and families who want to experience happy and joyous births and receive fair and equitable healthcare. Our doulas and mothers live in **Bayview/Hunters Point, the Fillmore, and other southeastern San Francisco neighborhoods** where they depend on one another's strengths and resilience as they confront daily environmental stressors like community violence, intimate partner abuse, housing insecurity, and poverty, all of which impact their ability to access health care and rise to their full potential as parents, heads of households, and community members. SisterWeb's participants have long and documented histories of being destabilized by institutional trauma they've experienced from law enforcement, the healthcare industry, the workforce, and Bay Area education systems.

SisterWeb links mothers and families with doulas from their own communities and provides them with specialized prenatal, delivery, and postnatal nonmedical wellness support. **SisterWeb serves two critical community functions by ensuring that women of color receive fair and equitable medical care that leads to positive pregnancies and births and that AA, Lx, and PI women are supported in careers as professional birth workers, the importance of both have been heightened by the present social, economic and medical crisis.**

The Value of Community Doulas

Doulas offer comprehensive care throughout pregnancy, and support through the entire labor and birthing process. An essential element of SisterWeb's programs is linking doulas that are culturally and linguistically congruent with mothers; this shared background and experience help doulas build trust and rapport with mothers who may not know all that doula care entails or may mistrust her medical team due to past experiences of bias and prejudices.

Workforce Development

SisterWeb's community doula program addresses the barriers that women of color face when attempting to obtain economic mobility in careers as birthing professionals. Women of color who pursue careers as doulas are often underpaid, often don't receive critical employee benefits like medical insurance, and are forced to work in the gig culture with no job security or steady work. CBOs that do offer doula care often rely on volunteer doulas, typically filled by affluent white women. Such practices exclude many women of color, who, due to economic inequality, live in households that depend on their income.

SisterWeb's workforce program for birthing professionals helps two types of workers realize their aspirations:

1. Women who have already been trained as doulas but have been unable to maintain as a primary career due to lack of steady work. Becoming benefitted employees as opposed to independent contractors enables doulas to stop or decrease other part-time jobs, enhances their abilities to manage their own homes, be available to their client families, and gain autonomy through professional and financial stability.
2. Many women from SisterWeb's three populations of focus—African American, Latinx, and Pacific Islander—have served in supportive roles for their daughters, granddaughters, nieces, and neighbors during their pregnancies without realizing the knowledge, skills, and expertise they've gained could be leveraged to gain increased financial independence. SisterWeb can reach new workers and help them begin careers that will increase their agency and help them contribute to the financial health of their households.

Champion Dyad Initiative

SisterWeb co-developed a program with Expecting Justice, a Collective Impact project of the SFPD, called Champion Dyads that is being implemented at all five hospitals in San Francisco with labor and delivery units. Champion Dyads foster the support of one or two “champions” at each hospital to partner with a SW staff member to work together as a quality improvement tool to ensure that all women of color receive fair and equitable treatment during their births and pregnancies. Champion Dyads create opportunities for bi-directional feedback so that SisterWeb and hospital providers can better partner to support doulas and families from Latinx, Pacific Islander, and Black communities.

Why Is This Important for SF

In just over a year, SisterWeb has already formed critical partnerships in San Francisco: The five hospitals with labor and delivery units in San Francisco include Kaiser Permanente, University of California San Francisco (UCSF), Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital (ZSFGH), Sutter Health, and California Pacific Medical Center (CPMC) at Mission Bernal and Van Ness. SisterWeb leverages its current partnerships to increase medical institutions' understanding of doula care and foster support from doctors and nurses who can help ensure that all vulnerable mothers in San Francisco have access to a doula.

SisterWeb provides job security to African American, Latinx, and Pacific Islander doulas, paying annual wages with benefits to support women and families from their same communities who bear a disproportionate burden in maternal morbidity and mortality as compared to white women. As part of ongoing training and professional development, doulas are paired with mentors who offer comprehensive trauma-informed and healing centered pregnancy and birth education and coaching that includes on-call support from four weeks before to two weeks after the estimated due dates of their clients. Doulas attend ongoing clinical trainings like trauma-informed pelvic exam, substance abuse, breastfeeding and lactation, prenatal care, respectful communication, harm reduction, working with HIV+ patients, anti-racist & anti-bias training, childbirth education, and ACEs to better prepare them in their careers. SisterWeb will also offer mental health support to each doula like group support sessions or community healing circles to help avoid doula burnout and increase job retention and satisfaction.

SF Board of Supervisors & Leaders That Endorsed SisterWeb at City Hall

List Of Supporters & Partners | District 1 Supervisor: Sandra Lee Fewer | District 7, Board of Supervisors President: Norman Yee | District 8 Supervisor: Rafael Mandelman | District 9 Supervisor: Hillary Ronen | District 10 Supervisor: Shamann Walton | District 11 Supervisor: Ahsha Safai | California State BOE, 2nd District Chair, Malia Cohen | Former Supervisor: Katie Tang | Former Supervisor: Vallie Brown | Former Supervisor Carmen Chu | The SF Foundation | SF Health Plan | Every Mother Counts | UC Berkeley | Young Community Developers | CA PTBi (Preterm Birth Initiative) Jonathan Fuchs | Anthem Blue Cross | ZSFG / SF General Hospital Foundation | Expecting Justice | First Five | SF Public Health Foundation